

February 16, 2017

***Written testimony of Brett Stewart, MHA, LNHA, Administrator at Countryside Manor of Bristol
Concerning the Governor's Recommended FY 2018 and FY 2019 Proposed Budget***

Good evening Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker and to the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Brett Stewart. I am the Administrator at Countryside Manor of Bristol in Bristol, Connecticut. Countryside Manor has been providing nursing home care in the community of Bristol with 90 skilled nursing and rehabilitative therapy and over 160 employees for over fifty years.

I want to begin by letting you know how proud I am to be here with some of the key people from Countryside Manor. I'm the Administrator, but our devoted caregivers, from RNs, LPNs, CNAs, MDs, APRNs, and therapists all want what I want----that is to deliver the highest quality care experience to anyone who comes to our facility. These workers are doing an amazing job, and I am so grateful to them, and proud of them, for everything they are doing.

But making the nursing home care great has so many challenges. Making the care what everyone wants for their loved ones is getting harder and harder to provide. And the reason it's getting so hard isn't really difficult to understand---there has been almost no help in the state budget for now going on 10 years. If the budget passes as is, it will be a full decade of nearly flat funding for our nursing facility. More devastating, is the idea that our nursing facility could be cut this session because of our state's ongoing financial troubles.

However, this year the Department of Social Services began implementing a policy that will cut the property component of our rates---and these cuts will grow even more on July 1, 2017. At Countryside Manor our state revenue will decrease significantly in the next budget cycle. It is really beyond my ability to understand how we could deliver the care we want to deliver if these cuts stand. This is happening at a time when our costs are going up. For example last year, we significantly increased the wages and benefits for our hardworking employees. We also understand that the proposed budget will increase the fines nursing homes pay by 400 per cent (from \$5,000 to \$20,000.). When no new resources have been provided in ten years, how is it fair to increase the fines so dramatically?

However, we have so many additional pressures beyond the important need to pay our workers a fair wage for the great jobs they are doing and doing our best to avoid fines. Here at Countryside Manor the needs of our residents are also increasing. The acuity of our residents is so much more complex as our populations

ages. And that there are more options for those with fewer care needs to be home and getting services there. But the residents that come to us have specific need to be with us for the services and care we provide them. Their needs are too complex for care at home.

Please help us deliver the high quality care we want to deliver by reversing cuts to our nursing homes.

On behalf of everyone here at Countryside Manor of Bristol, thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Brett N. Stewart, MHA, LNHA
Administrator